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ADVOCATE OF PEACE.

MARCH, 1856.

A SPEC OF WAR.

WHEN this communication is before the readers of the Advocate, they will doubtless be well apprised of the nature of the dispute between the British and American governments, regarding the settlements of the former, on the coast of Central America. It has been thought by those of our citizens who being reasonable men themselves, have naturally supposed those constituting their government to be so, that there is but little danger of a war between two highly civilized and kindred nations, bound together by so many ties, and where such vast interests must be sacrificed, for the possession of a small strip of land, or a petty island in the Bay of Honduras; yet the pertinacity of both governments on this trifling question is such as to render this unnatural, insane event a matter of serious apprehension; and this fear is considerably increased by the tone of the recent debate in the Senate of the United States on the subject. The possession of Ruatan the Balize, &c., is of very little importance to Great Britain, not worth a single week of war; for as long as she is assured by the treaty as free a passage as all other nations over the Isthmus to the Pacific, there can be no necessity or use in any fortress or settlement to secure it. To the United States the matter is of still less importance; the British occupancy of these places is not the slightest detriment to this country; affects us no more than those of Halifax, Bermuda, or New Providence. Yet the claim is magnified into as great a grievance as if British troops had invaded all the Territories west of the Missouri. We know that for objects, more trifling even than this, nations have gone to war, not so much for the ostensible purpose sought, as for the pride which forbade them to yield a claim once asserted, under the false notion that such a resignation would be dishonorable.

This unyielding, irritating ground is now taken in the Senate of the United States. Passing over the violent language of some of its members, we have only to revert to the speech of the Hon. Wm. H. Seward, who might have been considered one of the most pacific of them, and from whom better things were to be expected. After the usual profound regrets that a war should grow out of this question, he presents the danger of it, and the

offensive charge which tends to produce it, in this language :—"Nevertheless a war with Great Britain is now among the possible solutions of the present embarrassment. We certainly can look for no moderation on her part hereafter if we overlook her persistent refusal to fulfil this, the most solemn and important of all our international engagements." He then most extravagantly magnifies the evil to the United States of the British claim, thus—"It will be an idle dream to suppose ourselves free and safe if we leave her to waylay us on all sides of our Isthmus passages, from our Atlantic region to the Pacific States." He then makes the boasting parade of our power, resources and means to carry on the war; repeating the long practiced and ever-failing attempt to negotiate by intimidation. He then says—"In view of the circumstances, it seems to me wise to adhere to our demands, and yet to cast on Great Britain distinctly the responsibility of deciding on peace or war." He rejects arbitration, as "it would imply doubt of the rightfulness of the positions on which we have elected to stand," an objection which has sometimes been made, and always might be made, by both parties on the most doubtful questions; and he does "not know where we could find an impartial umpire in the present disturbed condition of Europe;" as if it was necessary to go to Europe for one. He then offers his advice to our government: "My counsel, therefore, is a notice to Great Britain that we shall interfere to prevent her exercise of dominion in South America, if it shall not be discontinued within one year, and also that authority be now given to the President to execute that delayed purpose." And he closes by recommending that preparations for war be made during the interval of the year.

Now let us see what the consequences must be, if the whole ground and course proposed by Mr. Seward should be taken, as they are very likely to be, as apparently the most moderate. The government of Great Britain is as sincere in its belief, that its view of the question is the true one, as ours is to the contrary; and, like Mr. Seward, may say, it seems to us "wise to adhere to our demands, and yet to cast on the United States distinctly the responsibility of deciding on peace or war;" and while we are making military preparations, will be making corresponding ones on their part, not perceiving any more than ourselves that the accumulation of combustibles increases the danger of conflagration. Of course, at the termination of the year of probation, the disputed settlements of Great Britain in Central America will still be found in her possession with a strong force prepared to defend them. The President will then have authority (according to the soft language of Mr. Seward) "to execute that delayed purpose;" in plain English, to expel the British by force. He will have no discretion in the matter, as he will consider this authority as an obligation on him to do so; but such an attempt would be a positive act of war, aggressive on our part, and defensive on that of Great Britain; and how should we then "cast on Great Britain distinctly the responsibility of deciding upon peace or war?" The guilt of all the miseries, desolations and crimes of war would fall on us; and the fair fame of America would go down to posterity, loaded with the obloquy of the

most unnatural, unnecessary, aggressive and disastrous war which ever afflicted mankind.

Can this dreadful event be averted ? It can only be by repudiating the sentiments avowed by Mr. Seward and other senators of the United States. It is incumbent on the friends of peace to show that they are false: that whether right or wrong our claim does not justify a war: that any evil or danger arising from the British settlements in Central America is nothing compared to those which will be incurred by war: that military preparations to meet this conflict are more likely to promote than to avert it: that any attempts to dispossess the British forces of the positions they occupy must be entirely unsuccessful: that a cheerful resignation of our claim in this dispute, in friendship and good feeling, will not only procure us greater advantages than we can get by menacing perseverance, but will be far more honorable in the eye of every rational and patriotic man: and, above all that a war incurred in this case, will be a tremendous national crime, in defiance of the Most High, for which all its promoters will merit an awful retribution, in time and eternity; and against which every true Christian should bear his most solemn and urgent protest.

J. P. B.

[For the Advocate of Peace.]

HOW SHALL AN END BE PUT TO THE PRACTICE OF INTERNATIONAL WAR ?

IN a recent number under this head we came to the conclusion that this much desired boon must be achieved by a change in the public religion of Christendom. And while we say this, we would not be understood a change in the common public exercises of the Sabbath; far from this. We believe the sentiment usually inculcated in what are styled our Evangelical Churches is in accordance with doctrines and teachings of the Prince of Peace. What then must be the ultimate features of this change ?

This question is proposed as the theme of this article. In our previous Number we noticed the various religions of the world, Islam, Greek, Romish and Episcopalian, all alike giving support to war; and, indeed, nearly all sects of the Protestant Church contaminated with the same error. To the question before us then we answer summarily, The Christian Church, and by this we mean particularly the Protestant churches, for from these we expect all efficient reforms: the Christian Church must adopt the sentiment of individual, moral and religious responsibility, for individual acts pertaining to public affairs, or, in other words, our political and all our acts pertaining to state affairs must be regarded as subject to the same law of responsibility to God as our other acts. The common sense maxim, clothed also with Scripture sanction, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous; and he that committeth sins is of the devil," must be extended to all our acts as members of the State. That this is not the case, especially as relates to